

## Developing a citizen science app to evaluate human-wildlife encounters

Department: Sustainable Development

Research group: Environmental Sciences

Supervisor: Dr Ine Dorresteijn & Dr Britta Ricker

Email address: [i.dorresteijn@uu.nl](mailto:i.dorresteijn@uu.nl)

### Project description

The Netherlands experiences a major wildlife comeback. Several ungulate species, are recolonizing or strongly increasing in numbers, while others, such as the European bison, semi-domestic grazers or beaver have been (re)introduced. In the Netherlands, high numbers of wildlife live in extremely urbanized and densely populated environments and humans-wildlife interactions are increasing. There are conflicting views within society on these interactions. Some celebrate the comeback as a major conservation success, emphasizing that wildlife positively benefits ecosystems and human well-being. Others emphasize negative impacts on economic sectors such as agriculture, on conflicting biodiversity targets, and on zoonotic disease spread. Research on human-wildlife interactions have predominantly focused on conflict situations, with limited research conducted on the benefits of human-wildlife interactions (e.g. Buijs & Jacobs 2021; Lozano et al. 2019). Thus, to facilitate coexistence it is important to understand how people perceive human-wildlife interactions. In this assistantship we will develop and test a citizen science app where citizen scientist can record reports encounters with wildlife. In this app citizens can report each interaction and provide information about the species, location, the nature of the interaction and how they experienced the interaction. As an example, the project can be developed in iNaturalist (Drake et al. 2021). The main aim of the Bright Minds Assistantship is to have a proof of concept of the app by the end of the assistantship. The assistant will i) research the possible platforms available to build the app and choose the most fitting one; ii) build the citizen science app; and iii) test the app in the field. The Bright Minds Assistantship will be part of the research project WildlifeNL.

### Job requirements

We are looking for an enthusiastic student with an interest in human-nature relations. Experience with GIS is preferred. There is the possibility to follow-up on the assistantship with a Master thesis project.

### References

Buijs, A., & Jacobs, M. (2021). Avoiding negativity bias: Towards a positive psychology of human-wildlife relationships. *Ambio*, 50(2), 281-288.

Drake, D., Dubay, S., & Allen, M. L. (2021). Evaluating human-coyote encounters in an urban landscape using citizen science. *Journal of Urban Ecology*, 7(1), juaa032

Lozano, J., Olszańska, A., Morales-Reyes, Z., Castro, A.A., Malo, A.F., Moleón, M., Sánchez-Zapata, J.A., Cortés-Avizanda, A., von Wehrden, H., Dorresteijn, I., & Kansky, R. (2019). Human-carnivore relations: a systematic review. *Biological Conservation*, 237, 480-492.